

245.60**Referrals for Abnormal Blood Values****Overview**

**Referrals may
be necessary**

The hematocrit and hemoglobin tests conducted at WIC clinics are screening tests. These tests are used because they are inexpensive, simple to perform, and reasonably accurate and reproducible. If results from clinic blood tests are abnormal, more accurate and sophisticated tests are needed to diagnose anemia or polycythemia.

**Developing
referral criteria**

This policy suggests criteria for referring a participant to another health care provider for additional tests. Each WIC agency should develop referral criteria in consultation with local physicians.

Reference

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Recommendations to Prevent and Control Iron Deficiency in the United States. MMWR 1998; 47 (No. RR-3).

Referral Criteria for Low Blood Values

Risk criteria	The risk criteria for hemoglobin and hematocrit levels used by the Iowa WIC Program are defined as below the 95 percent confidence interval (i.e., below the .025 percentile) for healthy well-nourished individuals of the same age, sex, and stage of pregnancy (see Policy 215.61). Referral criteria are often set at lower levels than the risk criteria.
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Suggested referral criteria for pregnant women	If a pregnant woman has a hemoglobin concentration of <9.0 gm or a hematocrit level of <27.0%, refer her for further medical evaluation. Local agencies are also encouraged to work with local health care providers in their service area to establish referral criteria that are mutually acceptable.
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Referrals for infants/children	Local agencies are encouraged to work with the health care providers in their service area to establish referral criteria that are mutually acceptable.
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Referral Criteria for High Blood Values

Conditions indicated by polycythemia	Polycythemia (unusually high hematocrit or hemoglobin levels) may be an indication of complications of pregnancy such as inadequate blood volume expansion, hypertension, or pre-eclampsia. In children, polycythemia may be an indication of congenital heart disease or other medical conditions.
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Factors that increase blood values	<p>When a hemoglobin or hematocrit value is unusually high, assess the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smoking status (smoking increases these blood values), and • Hydration (hemoglobin and hematocrit levels will appear higher if an individual is dehydrated).
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Note: If one or both of these factors are present, consider repeating the blood work at that visit to determine if the result reflects actual status or problems with technique.

Suggested referral criteria	Refer pregnant women with hemoglobin concentrations >15.0 gm or hematocrit levels >45.0% for further evaluation.
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Note: Referral criteria for polycythemia have not been established for children and non-pregnant women.
